



CHAPTER IV:
Community Facilities



CHAPTER IV: Community Facilities

INTRODUCTION

Towns are obligated to provide certain community services to its residents and businesses. This section of the Master Plan identifies the existing level of service provided to residents and businesses of Amherst. In doing so, the number of personnel, the current quantity and quality of equipment, and the existing and projected capacities of each department's facilities are analyzed. The resurgence of residential growth over the last decade has brought with it increased demands for added levels of service which must be met by the various departments. The current population estimate and projections are based on figures supplied by the NH Office of State Planning (1997) as discussed in the Population and Demographics section. As a small town, the annual population growth in Amherst is too small a number to accurately project from year to year. As such, the projections supplied are based on five year periods from 1997 to 2020.

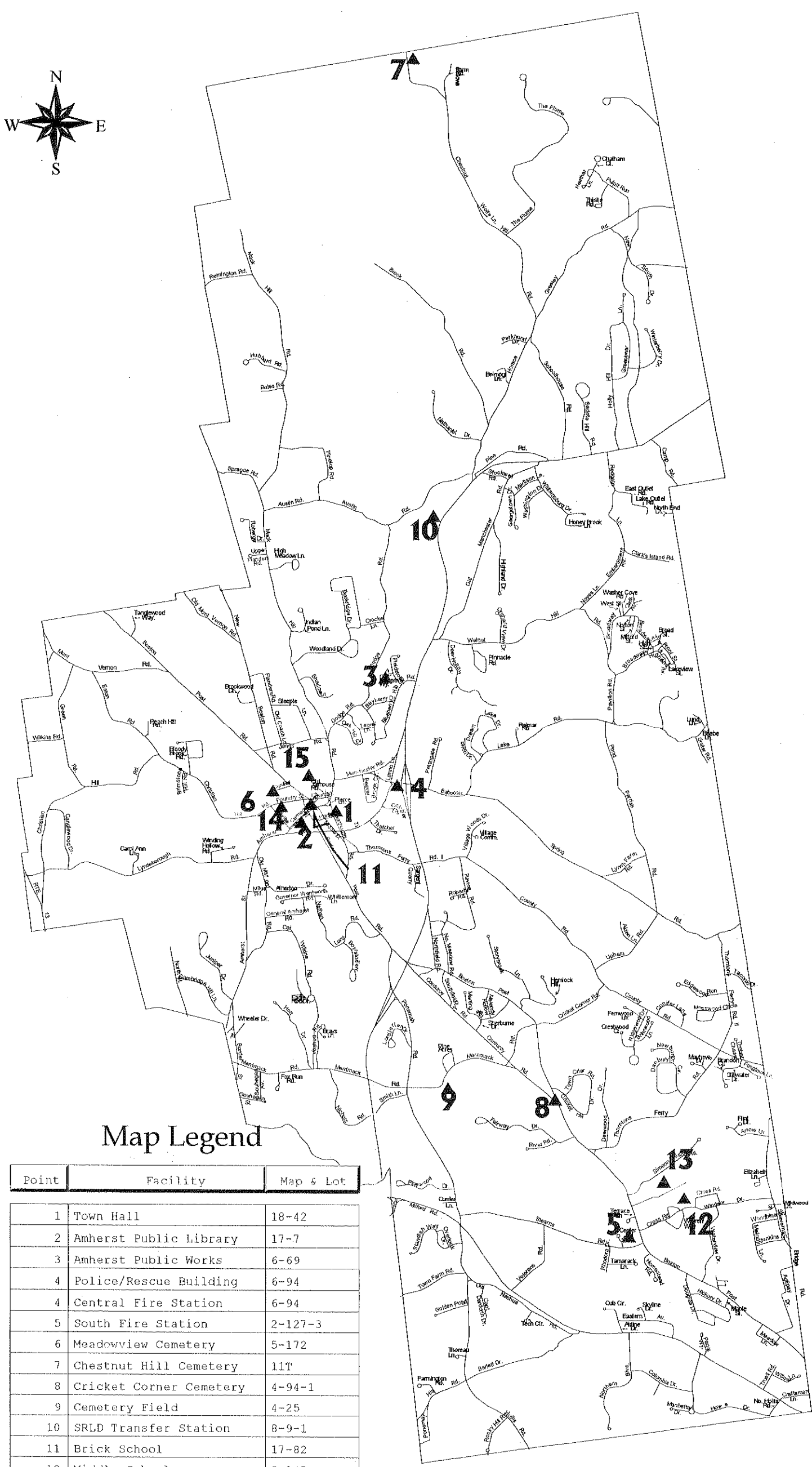
The community facilities covered may be described in simple groupings by public safety, public works, public education and general government. Conditions in the Amherst Fire Department, Rescue Squad, and Police Department are discussed under the notion of public safety. The public works area contains discussion of the Public Works Department, the solid waste and recycling conditions, public cemeteries, and the public water system. The education in Amherst is tended to by the Supervisory Administrative Unit #39 and involves the school district. Also discussed in this grouping is the Town Library and Recreation Department. Finally, a brief discussion of the Town Hall facility is presented. The location of facilities associated with each department are mapped in Map IV-1 according to the community facilities table presented in Table IV-1.

**TABLE IV-1
COMMUNITY FACILITY PROPERTIES IN AMHERST**

<i>Town-Owned Property</i>	<i>Map and Lot Number</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Town Hall & Land	18-42	1.62
Library & land	17-7	0.45
Highway Dept. Land & Bldg.	6-69	7.00
Police/Rescue/Fire Land * Police/Rescue Building * Central Fire Station	6-94	3.40
South Fire Station	2-127-3	2.12
Baboosic Lake Land & Bldg.	24-13-2	2.80
Baboosic Lake Land	24-13-1	3.50
Baboosic Dump	6-86	2.50
Jones Lot	2-26-1	1.50
Meadowview Cemetery * Tool House	5-172	11.50
Howard Cemetery Addition	17-51	4.25
Chestnut Hill Cemetery	11T	1.38
Cricket Corner Cemetery	4-94-1	0.67
Potters Field	1-1-32	1.00
Souhegan Regional Landfill	8-9-1	35.46
Thibodeau Land	2-163	3.50
Kutick Land	3-34-3	.01
Cemetery Field	4-25	47.85
Winslow Pit	2-26-2-2	0.45
Bragdon Farm	8-54-1	59.26
Bragdon Farm	8-56	18.50
Bragdon Farm (Bedford)	30-15	

<i>Town-Owned Parks</i>	<i>Map and Lot Number</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Village Tennis Courts & Land	17-13	0.78
Village Fire Station Land	17-26	0.23
Sullivan Land	20-4-1	0.26
Court House Common	16-15	0.23
Pierce Common	17-17-4	0.25
Spalding Common	17-10	1.06
Huntington Common	16-14	0.42
School Street Park	17-17-2	0.63
Mack Hill Common	19-21	0.09
Carriage Common	17-17-1	0.67
Main Street Common	17-17-3	2.00
Boson Post Village Common	17-17-6	0.33
Civil War Common	17-17-5	0.50
Gault Land	25-28	0.11
Bowling Alley Land	25-104	0.03
Triangle at Broadway	24-3	0.07

MAP IV-1
LOCATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Map Legend

Point	Facility	Map & Lot
1	Town Hall	18-42
2	Amherst Public Library	17-7
3	Amherst Public Works	6-69
4	Police/Rescue Building	6-94
4	Central Fire Station	6-94
5	South Fire Station	2-127-3
6	Meadowview Cemetery	5-172
7	Chestnut Hill Cemetery	11T
8	Cricket Corner Cemetery	4-94-1
9	Cemetery Field	4-25
10	SRLD Transfer Station	8-9-1
11	Brick School	17-82
12	Middle School	2-145
13	Souhegan High School	2-145-5
14	Clark School	17-33
15	Wilkins School	19-11

TABLE IV-1 (Continued)

<i>School District (SAU #39) Property</i>	<i>Map and Lot Number</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Brick School	17-82	.57
Middle School	2-145	26.11
Souhegan High School	2-145-5	42.18
Clark School	17-33	2.54
Wilkins School	19-11	3.2
Simeon Wilson Road Fields	2-141-3	3.73
Spalding Field	5-97	2.30

Source: 1996 Town Report.

TOWN CONSERVATION FACILITIES

For a complete discussion of conservation land, please refer to Table III-3 of the Environmental Resources Chapter.

FIRE PROTECTION

The Amherst Fire Department (AFD) consists of a paid on-call firefighting squad which serves to protect and preserve individuals and property from fire damage as well as attend to emergency situations. The scope of work is large and includes, among other things, dealing with carbon monoxide, hazardous materials, oil spills, vehicle accidents and suspicious odor situations, as well as responsibility for enforcement of the State Fire Code and Town Fire Safety Ordinances. In 1993, that role became larger when the Fire Department began performing heavy rescue functions in conjunction with members of the Amherst Rescue Squad. At this point, approximately 28 firefighters became First Responder and Rescue certified.

The Amherst Fire Department also provides emergency management services. In the recent past, this has involved implementing plans in response to flooding, snow storms, or other severe weather occurrences. In 1995, a hazardous materials response plan was completed and accepted by the State and the Selectmen. The federally mandated plan assesses the risks from hazardous materials in the transportation corridors and is used in conjunction with the regional plan. Amherst's level of risk is used to assess its share of contribution to a regional hazardous material response team situated in Nashua. Amherst's annual contribution of approximately \$1,900.00 grants it the service of firefighters with specialized training in the event of a chemical spill or other emergency and eliminates the need to establish its own force at much greater cost. Periodic drills to assure preparedness in response to emergencies are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the NH Office of Emergency Management. A drill conducted in 1995 was very successful and demonstrated that emergency responders are well trained and equipped. An additional drill will be performed in 1998 and may involve a mock air crash or mass death situation.

There are other factors beyond the readiness of personnel and quality of existing facilities and equipment that determine the adequacy of fire protection services. These include, but are not limited to the following: 1) the availability of firefighters; 2) geographic considerations such as the distance and response times from the stations to the fire threats and

the level of traffic congestion; 3) the degree and type of development; and 4) the availability of water supplies and water flow.

Since the last master plan update, development in Amherst has predominantly consisted of dispersed residential structures. According to the Fire Chief, the Fire Department has worked with the Planning Board to ensure adequate on-site access to water supplies, such as fire ponds. In most cases, however, the existing equipment carries more than enough water to contain and extinguish a fire in a residential structure. Response times are generally under 8 minutes and no more than 15 minutes.

Existing Facilities

In 1988, Amherst relocated the Central fire station from Boston Post Road to a facility on Amherst Street near the intersection with Route 101. The Department is composed of approximately 50 paid on-call members who operate ten pieces of apparatus housed at both the Central Station on Amherst Street and the South Station on Stearns Road. Central Station houses the Fire Department business office. It is approximately 12,000 square feet, over four times larger than the previous location on Boston Post Road. South Station is located on Stearns Road in the southern part of Amherst.

Equipment

According to the Fire Chief, the Town's firefighting equipment is in good operating order and there are no serious equipment deficiencies within the Department. In 1992 and 1993 the Town added a utility truck and a rescue vehicle, respectively and in 1996, the Town approved a new ladder truck to be located at Central Station. The Department annually puts \$50,000 into two accounts for capital reserve, through which the new truck was purchased, resulting in a now depleted reserve account. Expansion of the current fleet is limited to the possibility of obtaining an additional small rescue truck to carry equipment for rescue calls. When sufficient reserve money again becomes available, the Department plans to replace Engine 2 and Tanker 1 with one combined engine/pumper to be purchased new. The earliest possible date for replacement will be the year 2000. Engines 1 through 5 are all diesel engines, providing enough power to rapidly respond to emergency events even when carrying between 750 and 1,500 gallons of water. It is expected that engines 1, 3, and 5, model years 1995, 1987, and 1991 respectively, should last for 25 years. The aerial the tower should last for 30 years before replacement.

TABLE IV-2
FIRE TRUCK EQUIPMENT

Engine 1:	1,000 gal. pumper tank
Engine 2:	1,500 gal. pumper tank
Engine 3:	1,500 gal. pumper tank/combo
Engine 4:	brush truck & pumper
Engine 5:	750 gal. pumper
Tower 1:	aerial tower 102 ft.
Tanker 1:	4 wheel drive, 2,000 gal. capacity
Tanker 2:	2,000 gal capacity
Rescue 1:	Utility Vehicle

Source: Amherst Fire Department.

Availability of Fire Fighters

The current on-call fire fighters continue to provide good service to the community. Based on 1990 Journey to Work data, just under 80% of Amherst's residents work outside of town. Fire fighter availability, despite this trend, does not appear to be a serious problem. The vast majority of new development is single family residential and should not present chemical or other toxic hazards during a fire. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), just over 40% of communities the size of Amherst maintain a "mostly volunteer" Fire Department. Another 25% of those communities maintain an "all volunteer" department. (NFPA, 1991). The Town plans to continue with its on-call fire fighter system for the foreseeable future. The current fire fighting staff roster is listed in Table IV-3.

TABLE IV-3
1997 FIRE FIGHTING STAFF

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number</i>
Chief	1
Assistant Chiefs	2
Captains	4
Lieutenants	4
Firemen	41
Total	52

Source: Amherst Fire Department.

Activity History

The number of calls responded to by the Amherst Fire Department has increased from 203 calls in 1990 to 319 in 1996. A description of the quantity and type of calls is presented in Table IV-4. One reason for the increase is that the Fire Department in 1992 began responding to motor vehicle calls in an effort to more evenly distribute the workload between the rescue and fire services. The increase, however, is due in large part to the expanding population which has grown by approximately six percent since 1990. According to the Fire Chief, the current equipment is well within capacity to meet an increasing number of calls. The most frequent type of response by the Fire Department is "alarm activation". In 1996, the Fire Department responded 88 times (out of 319 calls) to activated alarms. As more and more homes are built and equipped with wired alarm systems, this type of call should continue to increase.

TABLE IV-4
FIRE DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY

Type of Call	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Alarm Activation	64	61	40	105	61	75	88	96
Brush/Forest Fire	22	24	7	10	14	26	9	13
Chimney Fire	17	14	10	10	7	3	11	9
Flammable Liquid Spill	12	20	2	3	5	0	0	0
Illegal Burns	0	10	9	11	19	12	13	12
Motor Vehicle Accident	0	2	14	17	16	20	17	21
Motor Vehicle Fire	19	5	14	25	16	14	7	7
Mutual Aid Call (Out)	17	20	15	23	34	39	42	26
Smoke in Building	16	13	17	0	39	15	9	17
Structure Fire	14	10	6	6	6	7	2	4
Other	22	70	34	95	112	109	121	155
Total	203	249	168	305	329	320	319	360

Source: Town Reports.

Emergency Service/Rescue Squad

The Town of Amherst contains a volunteer emergency service/rescue squad located in shared quarters with the Police Department at 175 Amherst Street. The building was constructed in 1981, with a successive renovation in 1996. The addition, which increased the total size of the building utilized by the Rescue squad from 2,400 square feet to approximately 4,000 square feet was primarily put to use as space for a training room. Approximately 1,100 square feet was added to the basement floor for training and meeting space and approximately 300 square feet was added to the third floor for storage rooms which currently hold uniforms and equipment. The present use and space descriptions are provided in Table IV-5. In addition to the expanding usable space, major efficiency enhancements were undertaken by replacing windows, insulation, and converting from electric heating to oil. According to the squad chief, the facilities are adequate, though a preferable situation would be for the Department to have its own separate building.

TABLE IV-5
EMERGENCY/RESCUE SQUAD SPACE

Type of Use	Square Feet*
Office	150
Storage	700
Training Room	1,200
Civil Defense	450
Garage (2 Bays)	1,200
Restrooms	2 Restrooms
Total	4,000

*Approximate floor space.

Source: Amherst Police Department.

Personnel

There are approximately 50 members of the emergency medical squad with 30 considered to be actively involved. All members are volunteers contributing approximately 1,000 hours per year in scheduled duty, training or additional services. The level periodically, due to a number of volunteers who may be absent or who have obtained waivers of activity. The membership consists of 4 paramedics (1 student), 15 Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) intermediates qualified to administer IV therapy and certain drugs and 8 Boy Scouts of America Explorers. The Town has insurance available for 50 members. The Department is currently looking at ways to attract more paramedics to the squad. The Chief cited the cost of certification, maintaining skills, and answering enough calls to retain experience in the emergency field as contributing to the scarcity of paramedics. The Department is in need of daytime help as most volunteers work and may be unavailable to respond to calls. Morale is high and recruitment has been difficult but successful.

The rescue squad receives calls from the Milford Area Communications Center (MACC), a local dispatching service of which it is a member. MACC offers 24 hour coverage to six towns (Amherst, Greenville, Lyndeborough, Milford, Mont Vernon, and Wilton) and provides dispatch service for police, rescue, fire, and public works departments. Response time for first responders is six to eight minutes from the time of the call to the scene, and more help may be available within four to six minutes from their call to the bay. Calls are made via pagers and/or portable radios. Because emergency work is done with set crews of three people, the most important factor being each members' availability, the Chief suggested that the current number of members should be adequate for the foreseeable future.

Equipment

Most of the equipment used by the Rescue Squad is used jointly with the Fire Department. Table IV-6 outlines some of the equipment utilized and its quantity. Since 1986, the number of portable, 2-way hand held radios has increased from 7 to 25 with the intent of providing each volunteer with a radio. The most pressing need is for 2 new defibrillators to replace the current ones, which will be outdated within one year. The cost for one item is approximately \$12,000. Money is put away annually in capital reserve for the replacement of ambulance boxes on the truck chassis which routinely occurs every six years. The current ambulances were obtained in the spring of 1993 and their boxes will be changed in 1999 or 2000. The capital reserve account for the Rescue Squad held \$58,372.42 in 1997, with annual deposits of \$20,000 made.

TABLE IV-6
EMERGENCY/RESCUE SQUAD EQUIPMENT

Type of Equipment	Number
Ambulances	2
Dry Suits	2
Cardiac Monitors	1
M.A.S.T. Trousers	2
EOA Kits	4
Pagers	50
Portable Radios	25
Mobil Radios	3

Source: Amherst Rescue Department.

Activity

The Amherst Rescue Squad responded to 489 calls in 1990 and 521 in 1997 indicating that the number of responses has remained constant. Table IV-7 shows the total number of calls by year. The seven year average is 482.8 calls per year. A yearly breakdown of type of activity is not available.

TABLE IV-7
TOTAL CALLS

Year	Calls
1990	498
1991	504
1992	526
1993	432
1994	433
1995	473
1996	475
1997	521
<i>Average Yearly</i>	482.8
<i>Total</i>	3,862

Source: Town Reports.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

One of the fundamental tasks of the Police Department is to help maintain the quality of life in Amherst by deterring crime. The Department's approach to deterrence is to maintain a high profile through random patrols of the Town. The Department measures this "visibility" by how many patrol miles are completed per year. In recent years, the number of patrol miles for the Department has fallen, due in large part to the increase in the number of calls handled by each officer which has risen by 30% since 1990 (see Table IV-8). These calls require the officer to reduce patrol time in order to handle administrative responsibilities. The reduction in patrol miles may also be due in part to the community's growth, since between 1990 and 1995 twenty new commercial sites and 199 new residential lots were developed. New development inherently requires more patrol time from the Department.

TABLE IV-8
ACTIVITY LEVEL PER FULL TIME OFFICER

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Total Calls	448.2	522.3	526.3	529.8	540.1	531.1	552.3	582.3
Assaults	3.6	2.6	4.1	5.6	4.6	4.1	4.2	7.6
M.V. Contacts	737.5	954.7	961.7	825.1	959.8	1046.7	1058.1	800.5
Accidents	20.7	16.5	19.7	21.1	17.7	18.0	22.1	19.6
Crimes	48.1	44.5	47.5	54.0	54.2	52.3	64.5	73.9

Source: Amherst Police Department.

Personnel

Between 1986 and 1997 the Police Department added three (3) full-time patrol officers, increasing from 11 officers in 1986 to 14 in 1997. This currently allows for 3 officers to work on both the day and evening shifts. Police staffing requirements are determined in part by the total calls for service received by the Department. Increasing population, in both Amherst and the region, increases the service demands or calls to law enforcement. Furthermore, the amount and location of commercial/industrial development, the type of residential development, and population changes also play a role in determining the nature and amount of police services required. For example, the addition of Wal*Mart and the new Souhegan High School in 1992 were responsible for 3.5% of the total police reports for that year.

The Police Department maintains records of criminal activity within the Town and uses these statistics as a tool to establish or revise Department priorities. The police force in 1997 had approximately 1.2 officers per 1,000 people, well below the New England average of 2.1 officers per 1,000. The following table (IV-9) is the Department's projected personnel needs for total staff between 1997 and 2020. An important consideration emphasized by the Amherst Police Chief is that any squad responds to the local community as well as a broader region since the activity on streets and businesses is driven by the through traffic of a regional population. As the Nashua region expands, the current level of staffing in Amherst, while currently adequate, may need to be adjusted. Should population projections hold true, Amherst may see the need to add six more officers by 2020 to meet the same level of coverage as today

TABLE IV-9
PROJECTED DEPARTMENT NEEDS

	Staffing Levels per 1,000	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Pop. Projection		9,663	10,300	11,295	12,113	13,457	14,686
Amherst	1.2	11.6	12.4	13.6	14.5	16.1	17.6
New England	2.1	20.3	21.6	23.7	25.4	28.3	30.8

Source: Amherst Police Department.
OSP Population Projections, 1997.

Although less than 10% of the Department's budget goes into equipment, the Department has focused on obtaining equipment to improve officer safety and performance. The Department is currently at work assembling a mobile information system which would give officers the ability to access data from local, state or national databases from within a cruiser. The effective use of equipment has both maximized efficiency and has kept capital costs down.

Police Facilities and Equipment

The police station located on 175 Amherst Street was completed in 1980, with an addition and renovation project completed in 1996. The total amount of space available to the Police Department is approximately 6,100 square feet, up from 2,400 prior to the renovation. It is projected by the Department that the current amount of space will be sufficient up to the year 2010 if current staffing projections are accurate. The 1996 renovation, discussed previously in the Emergency Services/Rescue Squad section of this chapter, made major improvements to the existing building by redesigning the layout of walls to create new rooms for specialty or necessarily isolated work, and by adding approximately 3,700 square feet of new floor space. A summary of the total space for both Police and Rescue with comparison to the area prior to the renovation is presented in Table IV-10. Regular equipment purchases for the Police Department includes two replacement cruisers every year, as each year the Department logs over 200,000 patrol miles.

TABLE IV-10
AVAILABLE SPACE IN THE POLICE/RESCUE building

	<i>Rescue Squad</i>	<i>Police Department</i>
Space prior to 1996 Renovation	2,400	2,400
Space Added by Renovation	1,176 (basement)	1,368 (main floor)
	416 (3rd floor)	192 (basement)
		494 (3rd floor add.)
		1,640 (3rd floor ren.)
<i>Current total</i>	3,992	6,094

*Approximate square feet of floor space.
Source: Amherst Police Department.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The Public Works Department is responsible for building, paving, and maintaining town roads in Amherst as well as providing regular maintenance of cemeteries, parks, playgrounds, and town buildings. The Public Works Department garage, known as the 'Town Barn' was originally constructed at its present location on Dodge Road in 1962. It was expanded in 1970 and 1979 to the current size of 2,925 square feet. The Public Works Director's opinion is that the existing facility does not meet current Departments needs. Currently, equipment is parked outside for lack of bay space which makes the vehicles subject to the elements and opens them up to the potential of vandalism, which has been a problem in the past. The addition of two new bays are considered necessary to make the site adequate. While it is unknown when these bays may be added, the director noted that plans for a replacement

high-arch salt barn have begun. He expects that the necessary garage space will be built at the same time.

Personnel

The Public Works Department employs 12.5 persons, a level which it has maintained since the last master plan was written. The positions are listed in Table IV-11. Included in the staff, the Public Works Department also oversees 3 persons from the solid waste division for the operation of the solid waste transfer station. The Public Works Director is proposing a reorganization of the budget for 1998-99. A current opening for a light equipment operator will not be filled but instead replaced with a new position for a working general foreman. Because the Department is often dealing with older equipment, a full time mechanic's position may prove to be necessary in the future to keep equipment in peak condition, particularly during the winter months.

TABLE IV-11
PUBLIC WORKS PERSONNEL

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number</i>
Public Works Director	1
Secretary	1
Heavy Duty Equipment Operator	3
Light Duty Equipment Operator/Mechanic	1
Light Duty Equipment Operator	6
Part Time Driver	.5

Source: Amherst Public Works Department.

Equipment

For the past ten years, the Department's vehicles and equipment has all been owned by the Town. An inventory of the existing equipment and its anticipated replacement date is presented in Table IV-12. A replacement program, including a capital reserve fund, is in place for all town-owned equipment and vehicles. According to the Public Works Director, this schedule is satisfactory and meets current needs, however a funding level increase is proposed in fiscal year 1998-99 to meet current equipment costs.

**TABLE IV-12
SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC WORKS EQUIPMENT**

<i>Item Description</i>	<i>Model Year</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Anticipated Replacement</i>
2.5 ton dump	1996	Plow/Sand/Utility	2002
5 ton cab, chassis	1993	Plow/Sand/Utility	2000
5 ton cab, chassis	1996	Plow/Sand/Utility	2004
5 ton cab, chassis	1990	Plow/Sand/Utility	1999 & 2006
1 ton 4x4 pickup	1993	Dir. Public Works	1997 & 2005
5 ton cab w/ dump	1987	Plow/Sand/Utility	1998
Torwell Sander	1993	2.5 yd. Sander Conventional	1999
Highway Sander	1991	Do-All Sander	2000
Highway Sander	1987	Do-All Sander	1998
Swenson Sander	1990	6 yd. Sander Stainless Steel	2003
Swenson Sander	1990	6 yd. Sander Stainless Steel	2003
Highway Sander	1993	6 yd. Sander Conventional	2002
Highway Sander	1993	6 yd. Sander Conventional	2002
Highway Sander	1992	10 yd. Sander Conventional	2000
Highway Sander	1992	6 yd. Sander Conventional	2001
Highway Sander	1991	10 yd. Sander Conventional	1998
Champion Grader	1996	Gravel Roads Plowing	2005
50" Kut Kwik	1992	Lawn Mower	1998
60" Kut Kwik		Lawn Mower	1999
72" Kut Kwik	1991	Lawn Mower	1997
York Rake	1990	Gravel Roads	2004
Sweepster	1989	6' Street Broom	1998
MoTrim	1997	6' Flail Mower	2006
Bradco 11HD	1989	Detach Backhoe	2001
Trojan Loader	1989	Yard Loader	1999-2006
Ford Tractor	1989	Utility/Sweep/Mow	2001
Bandit Model 200	1989	Chipper	2005
Cub Cadet	1991	Mower, PT	2003
Trojan Loader	1985	Transfer Station	1999
Giant Vac	1997	Leaf Vac	2003
Northstar	1997	Pressure Washer	2002

Source: Amherst Public Works Department.

SOLID WASTE DISTRICT

The handling and disposal of solid waste in Amherst is conducted by the Souhegan Regional Landfill District (SRLD) which also services the Towns of Brookline, Hollis, and Mont Vernon. Currently, town residents bring their waste to the Amherst recycling and transfer station located off Route 101 East where non-recyclables are dumped directly into trailers, compacted and shipped to an incinerator in Penacook, New Hampshire. The transfer station separates household trash from brush and wood scraps, which are burned on site. A fee is paid for disposal of white goods (refrigerators, stoves, air conditioners, etc.), and automotive tires. The only hazardous materials accepted at the transfer station are batteries and

fluorescent bulbs. Both products were prohibited from incineration due to their mercury content.

Recycling Program

The Town recycling center is also located on the same site. The voluntary town-wide recycling program was initiated in 1991 and currently removes some 20 to 24 percent of the waste volume by weight (see Table IV-13). In 1996, 2,868 tons of waste materials were collected at the transfer station, 688 tons or 24 percent of which was recycled. In 1997, a downward shift in the market price paid for mixed paper forced the district to discontinue collecting the material for recycling. According to the Amherst commissioner to the landfill district, the high volume of recyclables collected suggests that participation has reached its maximum level for a voluntary program. The recycling center currently accepts newspapers, corrugated cardboard, commingled containers (glass, plastic, and metal), and rags.

TABLE IV-13
AMHERST SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING RATES

Year	SRLD	Amherst		
	Total Tonnage	Total Tonnage	% of SRLD	Recycling Rate
1997*	5,561	2,304	41	21.4
1996	7,195	2,869	40	24
1995	6,933	2,791	40	23.1
1994	7,360	3,245	44	N/A
1993	6,602	2,825	43	N/A
1992	6,302	2,721	43	N/A
1991	6,311	2,848	45	N/A

*Through 3rd quarter only.

Source: Amherst Solid Waste Commission.

The volume of trash collected has ranged from 2,791 tons (1995) to 3,245 tons (1994) in recent years. The total tonnage has declined significantly from 1994 due to the removal of demolition and building materials and the continuing recycling efforts of residents. In 1996, the SRLD disposed of 7,195 tons of trash, Amherst accounted for 2,868 or approximately 40 percent. Amherst's percentage of the total SRLD waste has declined from 45 percent in 1991. As the population grows, however, so too will the amount of solid waste produced. Table IV-14 forecasts solid waste volume based on the overall generation rate of 2.5 pounds/person/day (Total tonnage of Amherst waste in 1996/1996 population estimate/365). If this rate holds true in the future, Amherst may generate 6,700 tons of solid waste by the year 2020. Currently, solid waste officials foresee no capacity constraints with regard to solid waste collecting and processing.

TABLE IV-14
SOUHEGAN REGIONAL LANDFILL DISTRICT
SOLID WASTE PROJECTIONS

	Projected Population			1996 Generation Rate	Solid Waste Volumes Projections (tons/year)		
	2000	2010	2020	(lbs./person/day)	2000	2010	2020
Amherst	10,300	12,113	14,686	2.5	4,699	5,526	6,700
Brookline	4,140	5,953	8,279	2.8	2,090	3,005	4,180
Hollis	7,374	9,299	11,940	2.5	3,360	4,237	5,440
Mont Vernon	2,115	2,448	2,978	2.6	993	1,149	1,398

Volume Projections = (population rate x 365 days)/(2,000 lbs./ton).

Source: Amherst Solid Waste Commission, 1996 OSP Population Projections.

Amherst has joined with eight other communities (Brookline, Hollis, Hudson, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, Nashua and Windham) in the Nashua Region Solid Waste Management District (NRSWMD). A waste management plan, required by law, was completed and approved in 1993. The Town of Amherst supports and participates in a household hazardous waste collection which is managed by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) on behalf of the NRSWMD. This service involves seven monthly collections for households and small quantity generators and is open to all Amherst residents.

CEMETERIES

There are currently four cemeteries in Amherst, one of which will likely not be developed further. Currently, cemetery plots are restricted to Amherst residents only which has translated into a low demand for plots. The Public Works Department currently maintain Chestnut Hill, Cricket Corner and Meadowview cemeteries, each one having available space. According to Town officials, there are no capacity concerns. While currently being developed into recreational fields, the cemetery commission has obtained Cemetery Field for use when Meadowview becomes filled. Over the last five years, there have been 132 burials, 20 in 1997 and 1996, 29 in 1995, 24 in 1994, 23 in 1993, and 19 in 1992. One important trend is the growth in the number of persons opting to be cremated. The Public Works Department estimates that between 35 and 40 percent of all burials in the last decade have been cremations. This significantly increases the life of the cemetery as one grave may hold an unlimited number of cremations.

PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

Small portions of Amherst are currently served by a public water supply. Pennichuck Water Works (PWW) covers a portion of Border Street, the Village District, parts of NH Rte 101A and the Bon Terrain Industrial Park (currently occupied by the Wal*Mart department store), where lines branch out to include Standish Way. Bon Terrain is the newest addition to the public water supply and became interconnected with the PWW core system in 1993. Another area scheduled to be added to the network is the Souhegan Woods subdivision along the Merrimack border. Pennichuck will acquire the franchise rights to this area in March of 1998. While PWW has the potential to service commercial, residential, or industrial customers whose premises abut a public road in which the company has mains, there have been few new connections. Most residential properties are located within the village district, which includes

approximately 300 homes. According to Pennichuck, this area has seen very few new attachments to the public water supply over the last ten years and few more are expected in the future. The greatest number of new connections were added in 1995 when water mains were extended along Boston Post Road to connect to the Police/Rescue building. Twenty to twenty five homes were picked up along the road as well as the Atherton Commons subdivision.

The Amherst water supply involves an interconnection of lines between Amherst, Bon Terrain, and the City of Nashua, which are supported by a 4.5 million gallon tank. While some of the original water lines in the village district are old, PWW reports that there are no leaks or maintenance concerns. As road construction or development occurs in those areas, however, old pipes are continually replaced. In general, the lines are in good working order, water quality is excellent, and Pennichuck has stated no capacity concerns. In 1986, demand for water around Border Street was around 653,000 gallons per day. Pennichuck reports that between 12 and 15 homes have been connected since then with little impact on the overall consumption.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The goal of Amherst's Recreation Department is to contribute to the physical, social, and economic well-being of the community. A variety of activities for children, adults and seniors are offered including field sports, water activities, day trips and theater. The community recreation director estimates a participation rate of 33 to 36 percent of town residents with youth sports (basketball, soccer, baseball, track and soccer) among the most popular. Total participation in 1997 was 7,683 persons, including 215 children from Mont Vernon who were involved in youth sports. In addition, an estimated 470 volunteers gave time to carry out the programs. As well as the aforementioned field sports, the Town also offers a lakefront schedule, lacrosse, volleyball, children's theater, day trips, and a comprehensive leisure time activities class. Among the most used recreation space in Amherst has been the Baboosic lakefront area where the Department provides for swimming lessons, a swim team, family fun days, and other beach front activities.

As Table IV-15 indicates, many Recreation offerings have seen a large increase in the numbers of participants which has had the effect of pushing demand for many programs beyond the limits. As such, many activities (2nd grade basketball, 3/4 grade basketball, youth baseball and the environmental camp) currently have waiting lists which may include between 1 or 2 percent to 25 percent of the total program's participation. In general, for all programs over the last four years, there has been an increase in total participation by 9% yearly, a trend which the Recreation Director expects to continue. Different activities however, have grown at different rates. From 1993 to 1997 participation in Lacrosse grew from 60 in 1993 to 170 in 1997, a total change of 183 percent, representing the highest degree of change.

TABLE IV-15
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION PROGRAMS

Activity	1994	1997	% Increase
Basketball	367	498	36
Soccer	368	490	33
Baseball	421	533	27
Lacrosse	60	170	183
Track	45	100	122
Softball	126	126	0

Source: Amherst Recreation Department.

Personnel

Recreation Department personnel consists of a full time recreation director, and one 25 hr./week program assistant. Seasonal summer employees include seasonal field maintenance staff, lifeguards, swim coaches and a gate attendant at the beach. The lifeguards and coaches are generally local college students.

Recreational Space

The highest demand for recreational space is for ball fields, courts, and playgrounds. Since the last master plan was produced, many new fields have been added as part of the Souhegan High School development including 2 baseball fields, 2 softball fields, 3 soccer/football fields, and 1 track and 1 football stadium. A complete listing of recreation space is offered in Table IV-16. The Recreation Department maintains all of the Town's recreation fields, except those maintained by the School Department. This year, the commission received approval to develop a 60 foot baseball/softball diamond and one soccer/lacrosse field at Cemetery Park. No other projects are currently planned. According to the Town recreation director, while recreation space has been added, the additions have not kept up with town wide population growth or demand. The director cited deficiencies in both outdoor and indoor space, particularly with baseball and lacrosse fields.

The NH Outdoor Recreation Plan (1994) provides a series of recreation facilities standards which allow for comparison of existing space in Amherst to the norm for the State. These standards are presented in Table IV-17 and provide for the recreation space needs projections in Table IV-18. In many areas, Amherst either exceeds or falls short of the standard. The table serves to illustrate local preferences as compared to the State while also providing a guide in planning for areas where town facilities may be deficient in the future. As already indicated, Amherst falls short of the State guidelines in playing fields for baseball and basketball. To meet current standards for the present population, Amherst would need to add an additional 4 baseball diamonds and 3 basketball courts. Another area where the existing facilities differ from the norm in children's play areas. Where the guidelines suggest 5 playgrounds totaling 20 acres, Amherst has 3 playgrounds totaling 1.5 acres. The largest deficiencies in the future will likely continue to be for sports fields.

**TABLE IV-16
EXISTING RECREATIONAL SPACE**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Facilities</i>
Middle School	1 Baseball Field, 1 Soccer/Football Field, 1 Indoor Basketball Court, Outdoor Basketball Hoops, 1 Softball Field
Wilkins School	4 Baseball Fields, 3 Soccer/Football Fields, Track Area, 1 Children's court, Outdoor Basketball Hoops, Playground
Clark School	Playground
Brick School	Playground
Spaulding Field	2 Baseball Fields, 1 Soccer/Football Field
Boston Post Road Fields	2 Baseball Fields, 4 Football/Soccer Fields, 1 Track Area, 1 Football Stadium, 1 Softball Field, 2 Practice Fields
Middle Street Fields	1 Soccer/Football Field

Source: Amherst Recreation Department.

**TABLE IV-17
RECREATION FACILITY STANDARDS**

<i>Recreation Facility</i>	<i>Standard per 1,000 People</i>	<i>Ideal Size for Amherst*</i>	<i>Existing Facilities</i>
Baseball Diamond	1.1	11	7
Basketball Court	.8	8	5 (4 town, 1 club)
Boating Access	1.8	18	17 acres water in lakes and ponds
Campsites	13	130	
Football Fields	0.1	1	1
Golf Courses	0.04	0.4	3 private 1-9 hole, 2 1-18 hole
Gymnasiums	0.25	2.5	3
Ice Hockey Rinks	0.05	0.5	0
Ice Skating Rinks	0.14	1.4	1 on common, several ponds
Picnic Tables	8	80	
Community Parks	6	60	10
Playgrounds	0.5	5	3
Playgrounds (acres)	2	20	1.5
Skiing (X-Country)	0.1	1	876 acres
Skiing (Downhill)	0.09	0.9	0
Soccer Fields	0.16	1.6	10
Swimming (beach)	0.5	5	240 lin. feet
Swimming Pool	0.14	1.4	2 private
Tennis Courts	0.95	9.5	15 (5 town, 10 club)
Track	0.04	0.4	2
Trails, Hiking (miles)	2.2	22	1,003 acres
Trails, Snowmobile (miles)	3.9	39	0

Source: Recreation Guidelines taken from NH OSP, NH Outdoor Plan, 1994.

**Based on a rounded population of 10,000.*

TABLE IV-18
PROJECTED RECREATION NEEDS

Recreation Facility	Standard per 1,000 People	Year				
		2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Population Estimate		10,300	11,295	12,113	13,547	14,686
Baseball Diamond	1.1	11.33	12.42	13.32	14.90	16.15
Basketball Court	0.8	8.24	9.04	9.69	10.84	11.75
Boating Access	1.8	18.54	20.33	21.80	24.38	26.43
Campsites	13	133.90	146.84	157.47	176.11	190.92
Football Fields	0.1	1.03	1.13	1.21	1.35	1.47
Golf Courses	0.04	0.41	0.45	0.48	0.54	0.59
Gymnasiums	0.25	2.58	2.82	3.03	3.39	3.67
Ice Hockey Rinks	0.05	0.52	0.56	0.61	0.68	0.73
Ice Skating Rinks	0.14	1.44	1.58	1.70	1.90	2.06
Picnic Tables	8	82.40	90.36	96.90	108.38	117.49
Community Parks	6	61.80	67.77	72.68	81.28	88.12
Playgrounds	0.5	5.15	5.65	6.06	6.77	7.34
Playgrounds (acres)	2	20.60	22.59	24.23	27.09	29.37
Skiing (X-Country)	0.1	1.03	1.13	1.21	1.35	1.47
Skiing (Downhill)	0.09	0.93	1.02	1.09	1.22	1.32
Soccer Fields	0.16	1.65	1.81	1.94	2.17	2.35
Swimming (beach)	0.5	5.15	5.65	6.06	6.77	7.34
Swimming Pool	0.14	1.44	1.58	1.70	1.90	2.06
Tennis Courts	0.95	9.79	10.73	11.51	12.87	13.95
Track	0.04	0.41	0.45	0.48	0.54	0.59
Trails, Hiking (miles)	2.2	22.66	24.85	26.65	29.80	32.31
Trails, Snowmobile (miles)	3.9	40.17	44.05	47.24	52.83	57.28

*Source: OSP Population Projections, 1997.
Recreation Guidelines taken from NH OSP, NH Outdoor Plan, 1994.*

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The original library building was constructed in 1892 and expanded in 1911. In 1972, an addition was made to the library building in order to serve Amherst's growing population. The facility was designed to serve a population of 5,000 with just under 5,500 square feet of total area. In 1987 a new addition and renovation was completed which enlarged the building to 13,500 square feet and added the capacity to serve a population of 13,000. This renovation included an improvement to pipes leading to the second floor, the air conditioning, and upgrading the electrical system. The librarian noted that the wiring improvements were made to 1990 standards and have again resurfaced as problematic due to changes in networking technologies. A phase I improvement schedule is included in the 1997 public works budget. Two offices now exist for the 4 full time and 8 part time staff members, and desks are shared between workers. Much of the new space added in the 1987 addition has been filled with shelves or computer space, with little change in the office area. Other needs for improvement include the replacement of an aging septic system, and replacement of worn carpet in high traffic areas. The library expansion and increase in use over the last ten years has led to a

shortage of parking spaces. Twenty-six are currently available to library patrons, seven of which are off-street parking.

Resources Available

Library use has greatly increased over the last decade as revealed in the circulation of materials which increased from 87,485 in 1985 to 140,496 in 1997, and in the number of registered patrons which more than doubled in five years from 4,171 in 1992 to 8,745 in 1997. The library collection has subsequently grown as illustrated in Table IV-19. An important contribution to the collection not illustrated in the table is inter-library loan which allows Amherst residents to obtain books or materials from other libraries. Amherst is part of the New Hampshire Automated Information Service, and the Greater Manchester Interlibrary Cooperative System (GMILCS). GMILCS is a consortium of 11 libraries in the Manchester region which share resources through a networked database and common library card. In addition to greatly expanding the existing resources, the GMILCS offers lower prices for new in-house materials through cooperative purchasing. The New Hampshire Automated Information Service is a secondary source through which any library in New Hampshire may be accessed. The introduction of these technologies has brought forth the need for the aforementioned wiring improvements in the library building. The library is also a member of the Hillstown Cooperative. Belonging to the Cooperative allows greater purchasing power for member libraries and books can be obtained at up to a 42% discount.

TABLE IV-19
COLLECTION SIZE HISTORY

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995
Adult Books	16,682	20,891	27,727	34,867
Juvenile Books	6,966	9,117	12,016	15,839
Total	15,383	30,008	39,743	50,706
Non-Books	862	944	1,636	2,630

Source: Amherst Town Reports.

Personnel

The personnel at the Amherst library consists of the Director, the Children's Librarian, the Reference Librarian, one Full time Assistant, one Part Time Assistant, one part time Library Technician, and six Part Time Student Pages. In addition, there are numerous volunteers who regularly help out with book processing and mending, preparing exhibits, serving as fill-ins, as well as providing general support for the office staff. Staff areas of the library are overcrowded. According to the library director, due to increased patronage and greatly increased complexity in current information retrieval, there is now a need to increase staffing in the reference section.

The analysis in Table IV-20 compares the Amherst library with space and collection guidelines recommended by the American Library Association. Amherst's library currently exceeds minimum standards in every category. When these guidelines are compared to the Office of State Planning population projections (see Table IV-21), it is evident that the current capacity of the library should be adequate until approximately 2005 when the issue of shelf space becomes a limiting factor.

TABLE IV-20
COMPARISON TO AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA) GUIDELINES

	Standard per Capita	Minimum Standard for Amherst*	1996 Amherst
Total Building Area (sq. ft.)	0.60	5,441	13,500
Magazines	0.01	91	139
Volumes	5.00	45,340	53,620
Volumes added annually to collection	0.20	1,814	1,873
Other Standards			
Linear feet per 7.5 volumes (Shelf)	1.00	6,045	7,150
Staff members per 2,000 population	1.00	4.53	8

*Based on estimated 1996 OSP population estimate of 9,068.
American Library Association Guidelines taken from Nolan, Lushington & Willis Mill, Jr.
Libraries Designed for Users, A Planning Handbook, 1979.

TABLE IV-21
PROJECTED LIBRARY NEEDS

Year	Projected Population	Total Building Area (sq. ft.)	Staff Needed	Volumes	Linear Shelf Space
1996	9,663	5,798	4.8	48,315	6,442
2000	10,300	6,180	5.2	51,500	6,867
2005	11,295	6,777	5.6	56,475	7,530
2010	12,113	7,268	6.1	60,565	8,075
2015	13,547	8,128	6.8	67,735	9,031
2020	14,686	8,812	7.3	73,430	9,791

Source: ALA Guidelines.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The public school system in Amherst may evoke the most debate and discussion from residents about a broad variety of topics. This section however, deals strictly with the capacity of existing facilities to accommodate and absorb existing and anticipated school enrollments.

The Amherst school system encompasses five buildings, the Brick School (Kindergarten, Readiness and grade 1 groups), the Clark and Wilkins School (grades 2-5), the Amherst Middle School (grades 5-8), and the Souhegan High School (grades 9-12). The Souhegan High School, constructed in 1992, is the newest school, and serves the two town supervisory district of Amherst and Mont Vernon. The building has no major structural problems and maintenance and upkeep is performed regularly. All five buildings are in excellent shape, with only minor physical deficiencies. Currently, projects are underway to resurface the high school track, retrofit the lighting system, remove and replace old oil tanks at the Clark and Middle Schools, and grade, seed, and loam a new field for the Middle School. The 1998-99 school budget contains money for each of these repairs.

Building Capacity

The overwhelming concern in Amherst is educational space. Currently, each building is over capacity, as Table IV-22 illustrates. When constructed in 1992, Souhegan's core (library, cafeteria, gymnasium, etc.) was designed for 800 students, with classroom space for 700 at an 80 percent utilization. At the time of construction, the student population was projected to reach capacity in approximately the year 2005. The school age population has evidently grown faster than projected. The school in 1997 exceeded capacity with a total enrollment of 842 students, a figure made possible through the partitioning and intensive management of space and increased class sizes. The other schools have responded in similar ways and by employing temporary classrooms.

TABLE IV-22
COMPARISON OF ENROLLMENT AND BUILDING CAPACITY

<i>School</i>	<i>Optimum</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i># over Optimum</i>
Clark	180	249	69
Wilkins	462	550	88
Amherst Middle	713	836	123
Souhegan	700	842	142

Source: SAU 39 Student Enrollment Projections.

Souhegan High School

In the 1997-98 school year, the staff for Souhegan High School consisted of 138 persons. A breakdown of their positions is as follows: 65.8 teachers, (51.0 in the academic program and 8.7 in arts and technology, and 6.1 for wellness and alternative programs), 1 dean of faculty, 1 director of student activities/athletics, 8 special ed. teachers, 5 counselors, 1 information director, 2.6 service staff (nurse/social/psychologist), and 40 persons in support positions (secretarial, custodial, classroom assistants, etc.). The building currently holds 842 students, 142 students over a classroom capacity of 700. This population was made possible through the use of portable classrooms and by maximizing classroom space throughout the building.

Brick and Clark Schools

The Brick and Clark schools hold classes in readiness, kindergarten and 1st grade. The Brick school holds the Administrative offices of the Supervisory Administrative Unit (SAU) on the second floor and 2 classrooms on the first. The Clark School has 12 classrooms, two of which are portable (1 double unit). With the use of portable classrooms, the facility is considered adequate for the years students. The faculty for both schools for the 1997/98 school year consisted of 14 teachers, 2 secretaries, 5 classroom assistants, 1 nurse and 1 assistant nurse, 2 custodians, 1 assistant principal, and one principal who worked part time between the Brick, Clark, and Wilkins schools. The student to teacher ratio for kindergarten and readiness and grade 1 classes was 18. The State Board of Education guidelines for student to teacher ratios suggest 18 to 1 for kindergarten, 15 to 1 for Readiness, and 20 to 1 for first and second grades.

Wilkins School

Wilkins School, which holds students in grades 2 through 4, is facing very cramped conditions. The optimal capacity is 21 classrooms, which leaves adequate space for offices, art music, Wilkins Extended Education Program, reading, Title I services, special education, and guidance. For the 1997/98 school year, these programs faced cramped conditions as space was made for 23 classrooms. For the 1998-99 school year, at least 24 or 25 classrooms are needed. With the use of 23 classrooms, the class size guidelines were exceeded at every grade level. The faculty at Wilkins consists of 23 teachers, 5 classroom assts., 2 full time secretaries, 1 full time nurse and 1 asst., 4 custodians, 6 kitchen staff; 1 guidance and 1 principal serving Wilkins, Clark and Brick Schools.

Middle School

The Middle School teaches grades 5 through 8. Mont Vernon students paying a tuition are accepted and currently 65 are enrolled, adding to a total population of 834 students. The staffing consists of 55 teachers, 11 classroom assts., 3 secretaries, 1 nurse, 6 custodians, 1 principal, 1 vice principal, and 2 guidance counselors. Academic space is considered cramped. The existing space has been fully utilized by space maximization. For the 1998-99 school year, the Middle School may be renting 4 portable classrooms unless a more permanent solution is found. The State Board of Education guidelines suggest a student teacher ration of 23 to 1 for grades 3 through 8. The 1996-97 student teacher ration for fifth and eighth grades were 26, and sixth and seventh grades were 25.

Enrollment Projections

Rapid growth in the community, a demographic shift tending toward young families, and the recent adoption by Town Meeting of public kindergarten has pushed the school system past its current capacities. The coming years will likely see continued growth in the student body population for both Amherst and Mont Vernon (whose 9-12 grade students attend the Souhegan High School, and whose 5 -8 grade students may attend the Middle School). While the actual percentage of population in their school age years has declined, their number is increasing as Table IV-23 illustrates. Because of patterns of in and out migration, school enrollments have historically been difficult to predict, even for one year intervals. Table IV-24 illustrates a comparison between estimated and actual high school enrollments; only once, in 1993-94, did the projection match the actual enrollment.

TABLE IV-23
STUDENT AGE POPULATION IN AMHERST

Year	Population Under 18	Population % Under 18
1970	1,870	41%
1980	3,066	37%
1990	2,610	29%
1997	3,091	26%

Source: SAU 39 Student Enrollment Projections 1997.

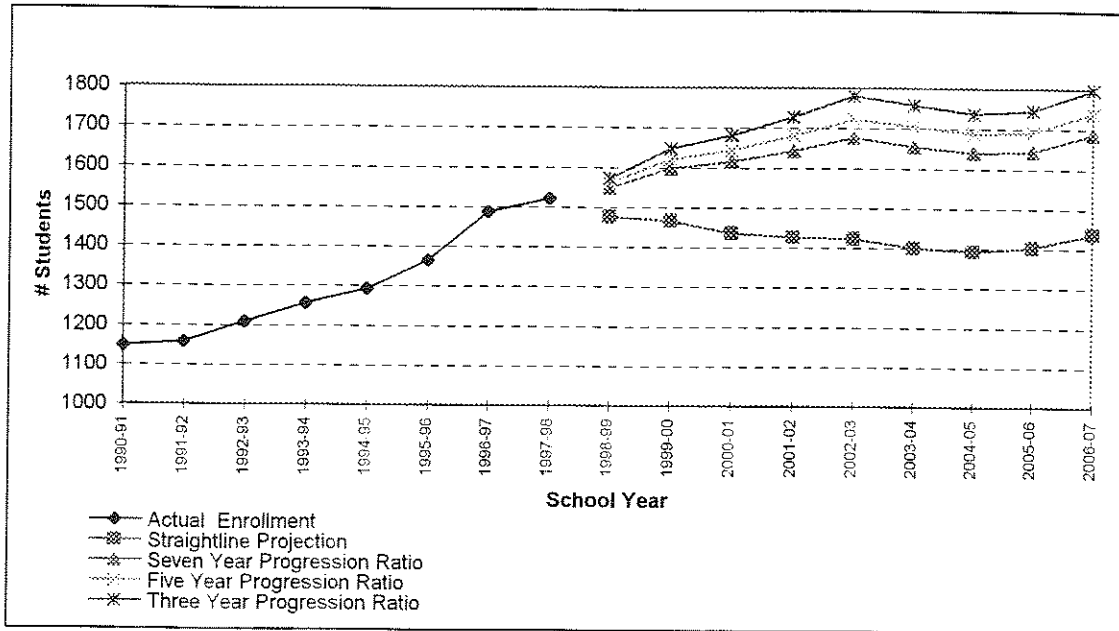
TABLE IV-24
ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL ENROLLMENTS IN THE SOUHEGAN HIGH SCHOOL

<i>School Year</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Variation from Estimate</i>
1992-93	550	597	+ 47
1993-94	675	675	0
1994-95	726	697	- 29
1995-96	717	761	+ 44
1996-97	807	813	+ 6
1997-98	895	842	- 53

Source: SAU 39 Student Enrollment Projections 1997.

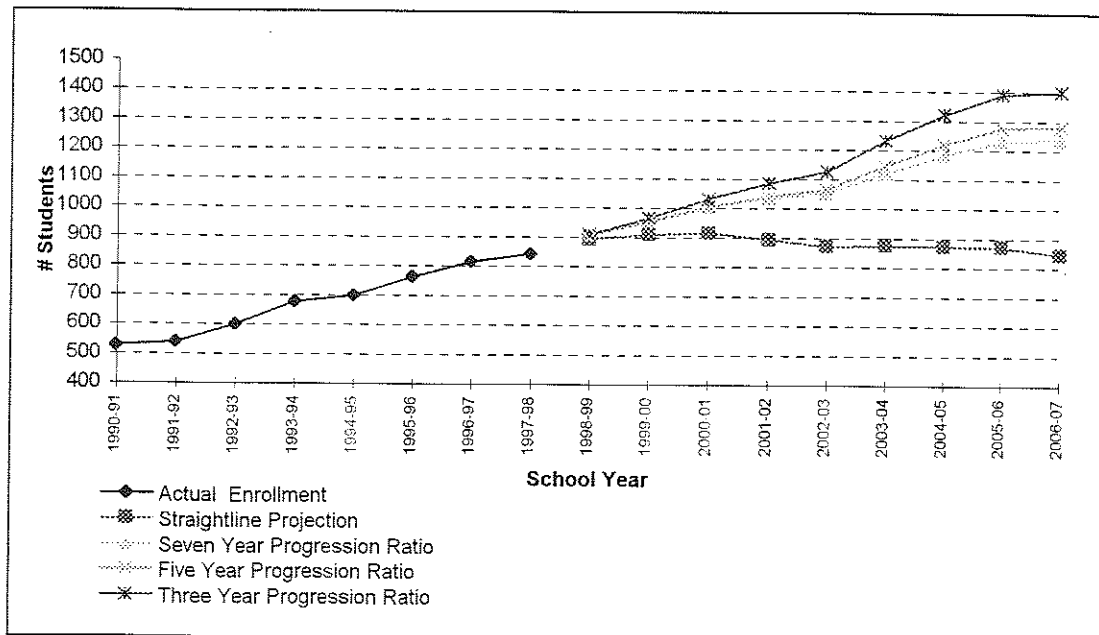
Two broad methodologies are applied to project school populations: the straight-line methodology, and the cohort survival method. The straight-line method establishes a comparison by simply graduating the same number of students from one grade to the next, based on any starting grade. The cohort survival method begins with a survival rate or progression ration, i.e. the ratio derived from dividing a grade's present enrollment by the prior grade in the previous year (current years 8th graders divided by last year's 7th graders for example). A three, five, and seven year progression ratio which compares groups of students three, five, and seven years apart is included to illustrate a projected range for student populations in the year 2007. The numbers utilized in this discussion represent a summary of projections put forth by SAU 39 in an annual report entitled Student Enrollment Projections. A more detailed discussion of the projection methodology is included in that report. A graph of the results is presented in Figure IV-1 for elementary grades R-8 and in Figure IV-2 for grades 9-12, based on the most current birth and population data for Amherst and Mont Vernon through 1996.

FIGURE IV-1
AMHERST SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS, GRADES R - 8



Source: SAU 39 Student Enrollment Projections, 1997

FIGURE IV-2
AMHERST SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS, GRADES 9-12



Source: SAU 39 Student Enrollment Projections, 1997.

While the straight-line methodology suggests minimal or negative growth in the student body, recent growth trends suggest otherwise. It is important to note that for Souhegan students, the straight-line enrollment projection (accounting only for the current students in the system), suggests the population may exceed 900 by 2000-01 before dropping to approximately 850 students by 2006-07. The cohort survival method, which includes some measure of historical trends, projects continued growth in the student body. Over the next decade, the number of readiness to first grade students may increase from 200 (1997-98) to 219 (2006-07), the number of second through fourth grade students may increase from 550 (1997-98) to between 568 and 583 (2006-07), and the number of students in grades five through eight may increase from 836 (1997-98) to between 976 and 1,077, with each of them impacting the Brick, Clark, Wilkins and Middle Schools. Students in grades nine through twelve, who will affect the Souhegan High School, may grow from a current size of 842 (1997-98) to between 1,238 and 1,399 (2006-07).

Proposed Solution

In 1996 and 1997, numerous solutions to the enrollment increases were studied including leasing space, year round schooling, expanding existing schools or building a new one, and regrouping the grades. One proposal for a solution to the present and expected overcrowding was adopted by the school board in 1997 and has yet to be voted on at the school district meeting. The solution adopted calls for:

1. Expanding the Souhegan High School core facilities and classrooms and maintaining grades 9-12 there,
2. Expanding the Amherst Middle School core facilities and classrooms to house grades 4-8 and establishing a separate wing for grades 4 and 5,
3. Constructing four kindergarten classrooms at the Clark or Wilkins School with continued readiness and most of grade 1 continuing at the Clark School,
4. Balancing grade 1 classrooms between Clark and Wilkins schools to maximize space utilization.

The advantage of this proposal is that construction is limited to additions to schools, thus avoiding the more expensive alternative of developing a new site and building a new school. The timing is right for the construction of kindergarten classrooms as the SAU may take advantage of a 75% State building aid plan available on a first come, first served basis, made possible by the New Hampshire legislature in 1997.

TOWN HALL

Amherst houses most of its Town Offices and functions within the Town Hall located on Courthouse Street in the Amherst Historical District. This building houses the offices of the Selectmen, Assessor, Accountant, Recreation Department, Zoning Officer, Building Inspector, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and the Town Administrator as well as a meeting hall on the second floor capable of seating 104 people. This hall serves various public functions including selectmen and committee meetings. Most Town Hall offices are perceived by the people within to be small and crowded. Most office spaces are large, open areas shared by two or three

persons that are open to the noise and traffic of the public. There is very little space for the Department heads to speak to employees or the public privately, or for someone working on figures to have enough quiet to concentrate adequately. Space concerns notwithstanding, the historical presence of the Town Hall adds vitality to Amherst center, and its architectural significance suggests an appreciation for the larger community.

The Town Hall currently contains 7,280 square feet and serves a population of 11,400 (Official Town population estimate). Aside from the open office issue, the largest problem is parking space. Thirty-two spaces are available for Town Hall use, 18 for employees, and 14 for the public. The employee spaces surround the hall along Courthouse Street with additional public spaces found in a lot at the intersection of Courthouse Road and Main Street. An additional problem currently being tackled by the Town Administrator is making the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Currently, neither floor of the Town Hall is wheelchair accessible. For the time being, activities held in the meeting room are routinely relocated to accessible facilities as needed. The historical construction of Town Hall, its close proximity to parking spaces, the roadside, and a historical cemetery make an expansion or restructuring difficult and costly. For the 1998 Town Meeting, a warrant article has been introduced which will enable Amherst to begin a review/recommendation process and establish the cost of making the building comply to federal standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Capital needs of each department head should be assessed and monitored on a regular basis so that the Town may continue to provide high quality services to its residents.
2. The Town should begin to discuss plans for a future library expansion which would include adequate office space for libraries, shelf space for increased volumes, and the latest adaptations for information technology.
3. The Town should expend the necessary dollars to cover the staff and funds needed to develop the following: an additional three small playgrounds equipped with play areas and recreational equipment for toddlers and young children; two large playgrounds that contain an additional six tennis courts; a swimming pool; a senior center/cultural center that includes an activities room, an art room and equipment for cultural and recreational activities; and one very large area containing trails, boating access, and additional play fields.
4. More educational classroom space is needed. The Town and School Board should continue to examine and evaluate student population growth in order to plan for a long term expansion project which will provide for school populations into the 21st century.
5. The Bon Terrain area is not sewered, which may be hindering the desired growth of the Town's industrial base. Amherst should continue its efforts to cooperate with Milford and/or Nashua to extend sewer lines to these areas.

The Town should develop a Capital Improvements Program. The purpose of this program is to evaluate the capital investment needs of the town to ensure that town owned property is maintained adequately, and that new construction or expansions of existing capital facilities are planned for in a manner that best utilizes scarce tax dollars.

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